



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

# Radio 101

*Handheld Radio Basics  
for Someone Not Trained in Radio Usage*



## When holding your radio

- Do not hold the unit to your ears like a cell phone.
- Instead, hold the handheld in a vertical position in front of your face, about two inches from the side of the mouth.
- Speak slowly and clearly into the radio.
- Never hold the handheld unit by the antennae.

## When talking into your radio

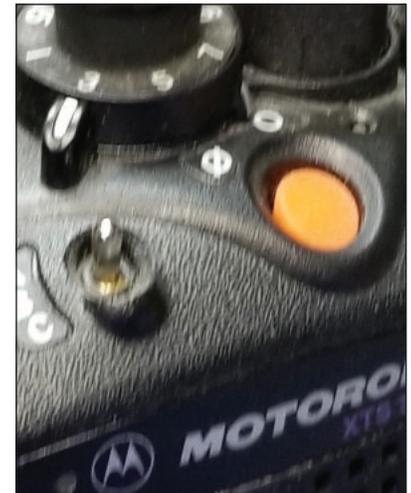
- **Be efficient** – less is more with your communication. Do not tie up the channel
- **English** – the international radio language is English, except when you are licensed to speak in another language.
- **Face the noise** – this points the microphone away from the noise and will eliminate some interference/background noise
- **No privacy** – Conversations are not private and may be heard by others
- **Repeat** – speak information back to confirm you have heard it correctly. When repeating addresses or phone numbers, repeat numbers individually (say 4-1-3-0 versus 4130)
- **Voice clipping** – depress the push-to-talk button 2 seconds before speaking and release the button two seconds after speaking.

## How to make a call

- Listen to ensure the channel is clear
- Press the push-to-talk button for two seconds prior to speaking.
- Say “recipient’s call sign” twice, followed by “This is” and “your call sign”.
- Once the individual(s) replies, convey your message.

## The Button

- This button is sometimes called the “panic” or “mayday” button.
- When the button is pressed, it sends a repetitive series of audible “beeps” along with the electronic ID of your radio to a predetermined location.
- Not all radios are equipped with one, and just because your radio has one, does not mean it is active.



## General Radio Terminology

- **Batteries** – hand-held radios may be powered by a rechargeable battery pack, or alkaline batteries (such as Double A batteries).
- **Power** – hand-held radios are weaker than a base station (fixed location radio) due to running off battery power.
- **Repeater** – a combination of a radio receiver and radio transmitter, normally attached to a radio tower, that boosts signals and allows radios to function at greater distances.
- **Squelch** – a control that eliminates noise, that is only available on analog radios. Digital radios, the majority of newer radios, do not have this feature.
- **Tuner** – that is actually your Variable Frequency Oscillator.
- **UHF** – ultra high frequency ranging from 450 megahertz (MHz) to 470 MHz
- **VHF** – very high frequency ranging from 150 MHz to 170 MHz.

## Speaking Etiquette Definitions

- **Affirmative** – yes.
- **Break, Break, Break** – you are interrupting a communication because you have an emergency.
- **Come In** – asking the other party to acknowledge they hear you.
- **Copy** – I understand what was said.
- **Go Ahead** – I am ready to receive your transmission.
- **Negative** – no.
- **Out** – all conversation is completed. Channel is clear for

other individuals to use.

- **Over** – message is finished.
- **Radio Check** – what is my signal strength? Can you hear me?
- **Read You Loud and Clear** – response statement to radio check if transmission signal is good.
- **Repeat** – used before you repeat something such as an address or numeric value.
- **Roger or Ten Four** – message is received and understood.
- **Say Again** – retransmit your message.
- **Stand-By** – I acknowledge the other party, but am unable to respond immediately.
- **Wilco** – “I will comply”.

## International Phonetics Used for Alphabet

- |               |                |
|---------------|----------------|
| • A – Alpha   | • N – November |
| • B – Bravo   | • O – Oscar    |
| • C – Charlie | • P – Papa     |
| • D – Delta   | • Q – Quebec   |
| • E – Echo    | • R – Romeo    |
| • F – Foxtrot | • S – Sierra   |
| • G – Golf    | • T – Tango    |
| • H – Hotel   | • U – Uniform  |
| • I – India   | • V – Victor   |
| • J – Juliet  | • X – X-Ray    |
| • K – Kilo    | • W – Whiskey  |
| • L – Lima    | • Y – Yankee   |
| • M – Mike    | • Z – Zulu     |

